ONTARIO PARKS

Kawartha Highlands
Signature Site

Management Options

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http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/kawa.html

or from Ministry of Natural Resources offices in Bancroft.

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Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park,
P.O. Box 500,
106 Monck Street,
Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0

Telephone: 613-332-3940 x 216

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Management Options

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Introduction

Ontario Parks is seeking comments from stakeholders, Aboriginal community members and the general public to assist in the preparation of a park management plan for the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park. We encourage you to review and provide your comments on this *Management Options* working document. Specifically, your preferences or ideas related to the options presented further on in this document would be appreciated and will be carefully considered during the development of the park management plan.

The Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park (KHSSP) is the most southern of the nine Signature Sites that were identified in *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy, July 1999*. Located 50 km north of Peterborough, the park contains a range of natural and recreational values that give rise to special management concerns requiring sometimes unique management strategies. Situated along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, this relatively undeveloped area encompasses 37,587 ha and features a rugged rolling landscape of small lakes, wetlands, forests and rocky barrens.

On April 21, 2005, the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site (KHSS) officially became a park through regulation under the *Provincial Parks Act*. The Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park is a "natural environment" class park, described as a park which *"incorporates outstanding recreational landscapes with representative natural features and historical resources to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences."* Although the Kawartha Highlands has now been regulated as a park, it is not yet operational (presently no maintained public facilities or services within the park). The park management plan will provide direction for the future operation and resource management of the Kawartha Highlands.

What is a park management plan?

A park management plan is a working document which is intended to guide all development and management activities within a park. The park management plan will set out the management goals and the approach for reaching these goals, thus providing a framework for decision making. Policies contained in the plan reflect specific resource and management needs such as zoning, permitted uses and resource stewardship. The policies are intended to maintain or enhance the contribution of the park to the greater provincial park system.

Where are we in the park management planning process for the Kawartha Highlands?

Currently, we are at Stage 2 of the park management planning process for the Kawartha Highlands. This *Management Options* document is the first to provide information on possible management policies for the park. In developing the management options, the planning team (which includes MNR Bancroft District staff and Ontario Parks staff as well as the Management Advisory Board) does not start with a blank slate. Options must:

- conform to policy direction for the park class (identified in documents such as *Ontario Provincial Parks: Planning and Management Policies, 1992* and *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy, 1999*), and
- be consistent with direction contained in *Our Sustainable Future, Ministry of Natural Resources Strategic Directions, 2005*.

In the case of the Kawartha Highlands, there is even further direction identified in the *Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Charter, 2003* (the Charter) and the *Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act, 2003 (KHSSP Act)* which must be considered in any options developed.

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park

Management Planning Process & Timelines

Stage 1 - Terms of Reference – released June 17, 2005 for **45** day review
Background Information - released November 25, 2005 for **45** day review

→ **Stage 2 - Management Options** – released July 10, 2006 for **60** day review

Stage 3 - Preliminary Park Management Plan – tentative Spring 2007 for **60** day review

Stage 4 - Approved Park Management Plan – tentative Fall 2007 for **60** day inspection period

Stage 1 of the park management planning process for the Kawartha Highlands consisted of the release of two documents in 2005:

1. An Invitation to Participate and Opportunity to Inspect the *Terms of Reference* for this process was initiated on June 17, 2005. The *Terms of Reference* defined the rationale for initiating a planning process and identified the staff, resources and key steps required for the preparation of a management plan for the park.
2. A *Background Information* document was released for review in November 2005. This document provided information about the park's natural, cultural and recreational features, as well as a preliminary identification of topics to be addressed during the park management planning process.

Both of the documents released during Stage 1 of the planning process can be accessed on-line at the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park website:

http://www.ontarioparks.com/english/kawa.html

Hard copies of these documents are also available by contacting the park office at:

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Office
106 Monck Street, Box 500
Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0
(613) 332-3940 x216
kawartha.highlands@mnr.gov.on.ca

What is the planning context specific to the Kawartha Highlands?

Unique to the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park are two documents which provide direction for this park: the *Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Charter* and the *Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act, 2003*. Both of these documents are a result of a previous planning process for the Kawartha Highlands that included substantial opportunities for public involvement and consultation.

After the release of *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy*, a Local Stakeholder Committee (LSC) was established to make recommendations to the Minister of Natural Resources on guidelines for land use in the KHSS, the appropriate protection designation and possible boundary refinements. Prior to making their recommendations, the LSC offered substantial opportunities for public involvement and consultation. Further focussed discussions between major stakeholders and the government resulted in the Charter agreement for the protection of the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site. Contained within the Charter was the legislative wording for the *Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act*, which was based largely on the recommendations of the government appointed LSC.

The Charter established the intent of the Ministry of Natural Resources to manage this area as an operating natural environment class provincial park and provides interim direction for the management of the park until such time as the area is protected under legislation (the *KHSSP Act*) and a park management plan is approved. The *KHSSP Act* outlines site-specific policy and operational direction for the KHSSP and incorporates the provisions of the *Provincial Parks Act*.

The purposes of the *KHSSP Act* are presented in Section 2 of the Act. The exact wording should be referred to; however, in short, these purposes include:

- Protection of the ecological integrity of the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park is the overriding priority,
- Policies that govern the park will protect the natural and cultural values,

maintain traditional uses and provide the opportunity for recreational activities that are compatible with the natural heritage values and semi-wilderness character,
- Permit continued access to private property and tenured land,
- Development of the park management plan and any major revision are made with prior public consultation.

Further details on this past process, as well as electronic versions of the Charter and legislation, can be viewed on-line at the Kawartha Highlands website noted earlier in this document.

Vision for the Kawartha Highlands

During the development of the Charter, a vision for this area was agreed upon by the signatories. As management policies are developed, there is a need to ensure that the Vision, as stated in the Charter (and reprinted here), is realized.

"Our vision for the Kawartha Highlands Signature Site would be that of a legacy of protection and stewardship, ensuring that the semi-wilderness characteristics are preserved.

The protection of the ecological integrity of the area is of paramount importance. Long-term protection of both natural and cultural heritage values is required for the preservation of this unique area. Careful management is required to protect the environmentally sensitive aspects of the area, and to maintain it for the benefit of future generations.

Traditional activities including cottaging will continue to be an integral component of the area, and diverse low-density recreational opportunities will continue to be available.

Continued public involvement in the planning and management of this area is essential. Management of the area will respect the existing private lands and tenure within the park".

Semi-Wilderness Characteristics:

- An area imparts wilderness moments (silence, solitude, dark night skies, etc.), but the landscape is dotted with evidence of human activities.
- A landscape which is seemingly unspoiled, while managed to support a variety of uses.

Ecological Integrity for the Kawartha Highlands

Ecological integrity has many aspects and is difficult to measure. Science has provided us with a good level of understanding of ecosystem structure, composition, and function. However, it is acknowledged by scientists that ecosystems are complex, constantly changing and still not fully understood. This is true of the ecology of Kawartha Highlands, where we are continually obtaining new information.

This represents a significant challenge for park managers who must work with incomplete ecological information during the preparation of this park management plan. These conditions warrant an **adaptive management** approach. By developing and monitoring indicators of management effectiveness, park managers can identify inadequate management actions. Management strategies can then be redesigned and adapted to reflect new information in a timely manner and limit impacts to park ecological integrity.

Ecosystems are constantly changing...

Adaptive Management:
Adaptive management is a practical approach to improving resource management. This approach means that there is a process in place for implementing resource management decisions, monitoring and evaluating the outcomes, and using the information to continually improve management direction.

The KHSSP is part of the larger landscape and, because of this, will always be affected by forces beyond the control of Ontario Parks (e.g. climate change, acid rain, activities on private property, etc.). In addition, it must be remembered that the park was also created to maintain traditional uses and provide recreational opportunities compatible with natural heritage values and semi-wilderness characteristics. Consequently, management must strive to achieve the best possible balance between management for ecological integrity and allowing for human enjoyment of the park.

The protection of ecological integrity (so as to preserve, protect and enhance) is established in the *KHSSP Act* as the overriding priority for the management and administration of this park. Therefore, management direction should ensure that the current state of ecological integrity is maintained and that efforts are made to enhance ecological integrity where opportunities exist.

What is the role of the Kawartha Highlands in protecting Ontario's biodiversity?

In 2005, the provincial government released *"Protecting What Sustains Us ~ Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy"*. This document sets the stage for protecting Ontario's biodiversity through a number of strategies. Biodiversity is an important component of ecological integrity in the Kawartha Highlands. The management options document should reflect the principles and strategies laid out in *"Protecting What Sustains Us"* and adopt policies that are consistent with broader provincial objectives while addressing local needs.

Biodiversity:
Biological diversity or biodiversity refers to the variety of life, as expressed through genes, species and ecosystems, that is shaped by ecological and evolutionary processes (*OMNR, Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy, 2005).*

Threats to biodiversity include:

- Pollution
- Habitat Loss
- Invasive Species
- Unsustainable Use
- Climate Change and other cumulative impacts

We encourage you to read more about biodiversity principles, threats and the strategies to protect it. The document is available at the following link:

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/biodiversity/

What are the "perceived" ecological stressors on the Kawartha Highlands?

The assessment of stressors acting on the Kawartha Highlands is one element of many ecological monitoring tools. By identifying the types and effects of stressors we will increase awareness of some of the factors affecting the integrity of this protected area and will help determine the appropriate course of action for mitigating or minimizing the stressors.

Ontario Parks (Bellhouse, 2005) undertook an interview process whereby staff, advisory board and subcommittee members knowledgeable about the Kawartha Highlands were asked a standard set of questions with a choice of standardized responses. Interview sessions were undertaken with three groups at separate times: park staff (May 24, 2005), Management Advisory Board (May 16, 2005) and

the Ecological Integrity Sub-committee of the Board (May 25, 2005).

It should be noted that the results of this process are "perceived" stressors on the environment, **not** measured stressors. The responses from the three sessions were analysed and results of this stress identification process are presented for each of the management topics with options addressed further on in this document. To assist in interpreting the responses presented in that section, the following are the list of standardized choices available for the three groups that were interviewed. It should be noted that where the groups differed in perspectives, the range of responses is shown.

The intensity of stress was rated according to the following criteria:

- ***low*** - little or no impact on protected area environment - unlikely to impair sustainability of the specific resource in question
- ***moderate*** – some impact on protected area environment - possibility that sustainability of resources may be impaired
- ***high*** – major impact on protected area environment - sustainability of resources in jeopardy
- ***unknown*** - impact on sustainability unknown or poorly understood

The trend of the stress was rated according to these criteria:

- ***increasing*** - activity and/or associated stress increasing
- ***decreasing*** - activity and/or associated stress decreasing
- ***stable*** - activity and/or associated stress stable
- ***unknown*** - trend of activity and/or associated stress unknown

The extent of the stress was classified as follows:

- ***localized*** - stress occurring in a relatively small area immediately adjacent to the location of the activity causing the stress - activity not widespread through the protected area
- ***widespread*** - stress occurring throughout the protected area, or if associated with a small area immediately adjacent to the activity, activity is occurring throughout the protected area

Stress identification is a tool that can help park managers to assess potential threats to ecological integrity. Further examination of stressors through monitoring and assessment allows management actions to be designed to minimize impacts on ecological integrity.

What are you being asked to provide comments on right now?

In past consultations for the Kawartha Highlands, the public identified a number of "management topics" that a management plan for this park needs to address. These topics fall into two categories and will be addressed in different ways:

1. For topics where there appear to be two or more distinctly different management approaches that are feasible (consistent with park policies, Charter, *KHSSP Act*, etc.), policy options are proposed in this document. Each topic includes a first option of maintaining the direction at the current level as identified in the Charter and legislation as well as meeting minimum park operating standards. Additional options seek to improve the ecological integrity of the park.

2. For topics where there is generally only one approach which is feasible (consistent with park policies, the Charter, *KHSSP Act*, etc.), a policy direction will be proposed in the next stage of the planning process. These topics are listed briefly at the end of this document and will be presented in greater detail in the *Preliminary Park Management Plan*.

Please provide comments on your preferences for the options identified in this document. To assist you in this process, we have provided a separate comment sheet where your input may be summarized and then submitted. If you have suggestions for other ways of dealing with a particular topic, please provide those as well. Please note, however, that any new options presented will be screened to ensure that they are consistent with park policy, the Charter and the *KHSSP Act* prior to being considered as a possible management solution.

This opportunity to provide your comments on the Management Options document is being made available to persons on our Kawartha Highlands participants mailing list as well as the general public through media advertisements and the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry # PB05E6008 which can be accessed at the following link:

http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envregistry

Comments and personal information regarding this project are collected under the authority of the *Provincial Parks Act* to assist in making decisions. Comments and opinions which do not constitute personal information as defined by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, will be shared among MNR and others as appropriate, and may be included in study documentation that is made available for public review. Personal information will remain confidential unless prior consent to disclose is obtained. For more information about this project, please contact:

David Coulas, Park Superintendent
Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Office
106 Monck Street, Box 500
Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0

kawartha.highlands@mnr.gov.on.ca
Telephone: 613-332-3940 x255
Fax: 613-332-1800

Management Topics with Options

This section contains management options for seven topics (in three broad categories) and is the focus of public review at this stage in park management planning. Discussion of these seven topics includes a brief background of each topic including a summary of related legislative and/or policy direction, a broad assessment of actual and potential impacts to park values, perceived ecological stress (results of the interview process mentioned earlier in this document) and is then followed by the presentation of possible management policies (options) to address the topic. Options begin with the least restrictive and each subsequent option is more restrictive.

ACCESS

1. Aircraft Landing

Traditionally, aircraft have landed in this area for the purposes of commercial fly-in fishing opportunities, picnicking, sight-seeing, camping and fishing. Several private property owners have small aircraft which they use to access their property on occasion or have aircraft docked at their properties (this is currently restricted to the more developed cottage lakes). Aircraft are used to transport guests to the commercial outpost camps on Fair, Elm, Pilot and Bear lakes. Some fly-in fishing and camping does occur unrelated to the outpost camps.

Management direction is required for any aircraft landing permissions (for example, lakes on which landing an aircraft would be allowed) and any seasonal restrictions that might be warranted.

***Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act* direction:**

- No person shall land an aircraft in the park unless they have paid a fee, hold a valid aircraft landing authorization and are landing in an area identified for that purpose (*KHSSP Act, Section 16 (a)*).
- Exception to the fee requirement only (still require appropriate authorization) is provided for private property owners or land tenure holders and their guests to gain access to these lands only (*KHSSP Act, Section 13 (6)*).
- Aircraft may be used for park management purposes or emergency services (*KHSSP Act, Section 16 (b)*).

Actual and Potential Impacts associated with aircraft use:

- Conflicts with other users (e.g. reduced quality of experience)
- Disturbance of wildlife
- Noise, water and air pollution
- Fuel spills
- Introduction of exotic/invasive species
- Safety issues

Perceived Ecological Stress
Aircraft

Intensity: **LOW**
Trend: **STABLE**
Extent: **LOCALIZED**

OPTION 1: Aircraft may land by permit for recreation and/or property/tenured land access purposes on any body of water, open or frozen, that the pilot in command determines to be safe to operate an aircraft on.

OPTION 2: Aircraft may land by permit on the following bodies of water only (open or frozen): Anstruther, Wolf, Loon Call, Long, Loucks, Bottle, Sucker, Rathbun, Copper, Serpentine, Poplar, Pilot, Elm, Fair, Bear, Cloudy, Crane, Agate, Cox, Triangle, Cherry, Stoplog and Vixen. Aircraft may also land by permit for access only to private properties and tenured land on lakes not included in the preceding list.

OPTION 3: Aircraft may land by permit on the following bodies of water only (open or frozen): the five main cottages lakes (Anstruther, Wolf, Loon Call, Long, Loucks) and the commercial outpost camp lakes (Pilot, Elm, Fair and Bear). Aircraft may also land by permit for access only to private properties and tenured land on lakes not included in the preceding list.

OPTION 4: Aircraft may land on lakes (open or frozen) by permit for access to private properties and tenured land only.

2. Motorboats

During previous public consultation on the future of the Kawartha Highlands, many people suggested a "no motor" restriction on lakes beyond the cottage lakes (interior lakes) supporting a more semi-wilderness experience and reducing the actual or potential impacts of motorboats activity. On lakes completely surrounded by park land, Ontario Parks can restrict access of motorboats through regulation under the *Provincial Parks Act*.

Significant cottage development is found on Anstruther, Wolf, Loon Call, Long, Loucks and Rathbun lakes. Ontario Parks does not intend to restrict motor boat access on these lakes. Generally, federal motor restrictions on these cottage lakes would need to be pursued by the cottage association through their municipality. The Management Advisory Board would provide support to the associations who broadly support safety related restrictions.

Crab, Bottle, Buzzard, Cox and Cold lakes each have 1-4 parcels of private land. Ontario Parks has been asked to consider controlling access of motorboats on these lakes. Where supported by the private property owners on these lakes, this may be pursued on a lake by lake basis.

Ontario Parks has proposed options, listed below, which suggest either motor free lakes or electric motor restrictions on lakes which have tenured land (e.g. recreation camps). A permit system would allow the tenured land holders access to their permit areas but the restrictions would apply for any other motorboat activities on the lakes (e.g. fishing, waterskiing, picnicking, etc.).

Previously identified problems associated with boat caches throughout the area will need to be addressed. Boat caches are usually found near portages of interior lakes but caches can be found in other areas not associated with portages and usually have some derelict and abandoned boats.

Management direction is required on motorboat restrictions on lakes entirely surrounded by park land and the appropriateness and control of boat caches.

***Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act* and Charter direction:**

- Access to property or tenured land is provided for if it was the normal means of gaining access to the property (*KHSSP Act, Section 13 (2)*).
- Regulating the use of motorboats (including waterskiing) and personal water craft on lakes where there are private properties is federal jurisdiction. For restrictions on these waterbodies, the Management Advisory Board will assist local municipalities or individual cottage associations to examine (where appropriate) alternative approaches. Ontario Parks does not intend to apply for any federal restrictions on boating for lakes where there is private property (Charter, page 10).

Actual and Potential Impacts associated with motorboat use:

- Conflicts with other users (motorized vs non-motorized, reduced quality of experience)
- Disturbance of wildlife
- Noise, water and air pollution
- Fuel spills
- Introduction of exotic/invasive species

Perceived Ecological Stress
Motorboats

Intensity: **LOW to MODERATE**
Trend: **STABLE to INCREASING**
Extent: **LOCALIZED to WIDESPREAD**

OPTION 1: No motorboat restrictions on lakes within Kawartha Highlands. Boats may be cached in specific locations identified by the superintendent for the purpose of accessing private property or tenured land only, with authorization by permit *(for example, a boat cache would be allowed between Anstruther and Rathbun lakes for the use of the Rathbun property owners)*.

OPTION 2: Motorboats to be allowed on any lake which has private property and/or tenured land. All other lakes are motor free. Those lakes which have tenured land only would have a motor restriction imposed (e.g. horse power restriction or electric motors only or 4 stroke motors only). Boat caches by permit and only available for access purposes to private property or tenured land.

OPTION 3: Motorboats to be allowed on any lake which has private property (Anstruther, Wolf, Loon Call, Long, Loucks, Rathbun, Crab, Bottle, Buzzard, Cox and Cold lakes) (subject to federal regulations). All other lakes are motor free. Boat caches by permit are only available for access purposes to private property or tenured land. Ontario Parks would consider motorboat access restrictions on Crab, Bottle, Buzzard, Cox and Cold lakes on a lake by lake basis where this is supported by the private land owners on these lakes.

3. ATV Use for Hunting Purposes

ATV use is perceived as the top ecological stressor in the Kawartha Highlands, thus an effort must be made to control the use of this activity with respect to protecting ecological integrity. ATV use also detracts from the semi-wilderness characteristics of the park which many stakeholders value. As a result of the Charter negotiations and legislation development, ATVs are not allowed in the area for recreational purposes in general or to access lakes for fishing purposes. A provision has been made to allow ATV use on the approved road and trail system for the purpose of hunting; however, no off trail use to retrieve game is allowed by the legislation.

Within the Kawartha Highlands, hunting for game birds, migratory game birds or game mammals only is permitted by regulation under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. The following are the 2006 dates of the open seasons of these species in Wildlife Management Unit 60 (KHSSP is part of this WMU) to provide a sense of when ATVs may be used for hunting at this point in time. Hunting must occur in accordance with annual hunting regulations.

Game Mammals:	
Moose	October 16 – 21
Deer (archery & firearms)	November 6 – 19
Deer (archery only)	October 15 – November 5
Deer (archery only)	November 20 – December 15
Black Bear	September 1 – November 30
Small Mammals (Grey Squirrel)	September 25 – December 15
Small Mammals (Rabbit/Hare)	September 25 – March 31
Game Birds:	
(*range for all but turkey)	September 25 – December 31*
Wild Turkey	April 25 – May 31
Migratory Game Birds:	
Waterfowl	September 24 – December 20
Canada Geese	September 24 – January 5
Woodcock	September 25 – December 20

NOTE:

- Hunting of wolves and coyotes is **not permitted**.
- Hunting of furbearing animals is **not permitted**.
- Hunting of American Crow, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, House Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Starling is **not permitted**.
- Hunting of groundhogs and porcupines is **not permitted**.

There are currently portions of 6 Bear Management Areas (BMAs) within the Kawartha Highlands. These BMAs were previously established to provide outfitters with tenure over a particular land base for authorization to provide bear guiding or baiting services to non-resident bear hunters. The legislation has provided assurance that BMA holders and their guests can access their tenured land via the approved road and trail system. No off trail ATV use is allowed. The ATV restriction suggested in the Option 3 below would not apply to BMA holders or their guests.

Management direction is required for the control of ATV use for the purposes of hunting.

***Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act* and Charter direction:**

- A person may operate a motorized vehicle or motorized snow vehicle in the park on the authorized road and trail system for one of the following purposes:
  - Access to private property or tenured land (e.g. recreation camps) (*KHSSP Act, Section 13 (2)*),
  - for hunting purposes
  - to access a park facility (on the most direct route from park entrance) (*KHSSP Act, Section 15 (2) & (3)*),
  - Trapping (for holders of a licence to trap on their registered trapline)
  - Bait Fish Harvesting (for holders of a bait fish licence on their assigned harvest area) (*KHSSP Act, Section 14 (4) & (5)*).
- No new trails for all-terrain vehicles or motorized snow vehicles shall be constructed in the park (*KHSSP Act, Section 10(6)*).
- Hunting and fishing will continue to be permitted within the park, under the control of the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*. To respond to public safety concerns there may be some limits on firearm discharge adjacent to park or private facilities (Charter, page 12).

Actual and Potential Impacts of ATV use:

- Rutting, trail compaction, erosion
- Damage to vegetation communities
- Conflicts with other users (e.g. reduced quality of experience)
- Disturbance of wildlife
- Noise and air pollution
- Fuel spills
- Introduction of exotic/invasive species

Perceived Ecological Stress
ATVs

Intensity: **MODERATE to HIGH**
Trend: **INCREASING**
Extent: **LOCALIZED to WIDESPREAD**

OPTION 1: ATV use for hunting purposes within the park may only occur on the approved road and trail system during the open season for any legal species.

OPTION 2: ATV use for hunting purposes may only occur on the approved road and trail system during the open seasons for large game mammals - moose, deer and black bear.

OPTION 3: ATV use for hunting purposes may only occur on the approved road and trail system during the open seasons for deer and moose.

RECREATIONAL USE

4. Backcountry Camping

There are currently over 100 campsites in the interior of the Kawartha Highlands that are used by park visitors and all are associated with the longstanding canoe route system. Decisions about maintaining, relocating, closing or adding to current sites will be made based on ecological considerations, carrying capacity for semi-wilderness experience, recreational demand and maintenance costs. Park staff are evaluating all sites and, in the interim, closing sites that pose ecological or health and safety concerns.

Backcountry campsites may require some upgrading to meet provincial park standards, including the construction of tent pads, fire rings, relocation of some privies, signage and permit holders. If backpacking trails are constructed in the park, new interior campsites on lakes not on canoe routes should be considered, in order to both reduce conflict between user groups and not increase the intensity of use on any given lake.

Management direction is required to address camping party-size restrictions, electronic noise management and waste management.

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Charter direction:

- Low density backcountry camping sites (Charter, page 10).

[**Backcountry:** A term usually applied to wilderness areas where there are no permanent access roads, developments or settlements. Camping facilities are generally primitive (fire pit, tent pads, pit privy) and few other facilities exist.]

Actual and Potential Impacts of camping:

- Conflicts with other users (e.g cottaging)
- Soil Compaction
- Fecal contamination of water bodies
- Damage to vegetation (tree cutting)
- Human-caused wild fires
- Phosphate loading of water (dish detergent, shampoo, etc.)
- Impact to wildlife (feeding, improper storage of food and/or improper waste disposal, creating nuisance situations)
- Litter/garbage

Perceived Ecological Stress
Camping

Intensity: **LOW**
Trend: **INCREASING**
Extent: **LOCALIZED**

OPTION 1:

- Backcountry camping on authorized campsites only. Maximum of 9 persons per campsite.
- Campers carry out and take home garbage.
- No radio free campsites (electronic amplified music allowed).

OPTION 2:

- Backcountry camping on authorized campsites only. Maximum of 6 persons per campsite. Several group sites to be established which would accommodate up to 20 persons.
- Campers carry out and take home garbage. Bottle ban for entire park (restriction does not apply to private property or tenured land).
- Electronically amplified music allowed only with the use of head sets.

OPTION 3:

- Backcountry camping on authorized campsites only. Maximum of 6 persons per campsite. Several group sites to be established which would accommodate up to 20 persons.
- Campers carry out and take home garbage. Both a can and bottle ban for entire park (restriction does not apply to private property or tenured land).
- Electronically amplified music allowed only with the use of head sets.

5. Recreational Activities

Many different recreational activities are currently occurring or have occurred within the park. Not all of the activities currently existing in the area are compatible with each other, park policies or park values.

Management direction is required for activities that should continue in the park.

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Charter direction:

- The management plan will provide for the traditional uses that occur within the area and will also respond to the Local Stakeholder Committee recommendations that were not specifically dealt with in the Charter (Charter, page 10).
- Specific activities identified in the Charter include: cross country skiing, dog sledding, hiking, horseback riding, llama trekking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, war games (paintballs), artistic pursuits, bird watching, rock climbing and sailing.
- A proposed realignment of a snowmobile trail operated by the Buckhorn and District Snowmobile Club is a major trail realignment that will be considered under a project planning process if the club proceeds with the application (Charter, page 12).

ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED IN KHSSP IN THE PAST AND NOT SPECIFICALLY DEALT WITH IN CHARTER

Lower Impact Activities	Higher Impact Activities
Hiking	Mountain Biking
Snow Shoeing	Dog Sledding
Skiing	Adventure Racing *
Sailing (no motors)	Rock Climbing *
Bird Watching	War Games (paint ball) **
Artistic Pursuits	Horseback Riding++
Nature Appreciation	Llama Trekking+++
Geocaching+	

NOTE: all current activities are or maybe allowed (as identified during park management planning and where consistent with park policy and regulations) with the following exceptions:

* High risk activity – only allowed under strict conditions by superintendent

** High risk activity – not allowed by park policy

NOTE:

+ Geocaching may be allowed by interim procedure under strict conditions – no off trail access

++ Currently this activity is very minor in nature and substantial infrastructure would be required to support authorized use (eg. parking for horse trailers) – if authorized, use could escalate

+++ To date, this activity has been a commercial venture and should follow the direction determined through topic #7 (Commercial Tourism)

OPTION 1: Subject to certain conditions, the existing traditional activities allowed by park policy or regulations would be allowed to continue on designated trails only.

OPTION 2: Subject to certain conditions, the list of "Lower Impact Activities" noted above would be allowed to continue. In addition, dog sledding and mountain biking would be allowed on designated trails with appropriate activity conditions.

OPTION 3: Subject to certain conditions, only the list of "Lower Impact Activities" noted above would be allowed to continue.

RESOURCE USE

6. Fuelwood permits

Fuelwood cutting is generally not permitted in provincial parks, but an exception was made in new OLL parks, like the KHSSP, where an authorized fuelwood cutting permit has been continuously maintained prior to the approval of the *OLL LUS* and where the property does not have road access. Such permits may be renewed on an interim basis with specific conditions (for example, time of year restrictions on cutting) but, where possible, alternative fuelwood areas outside of the park should be sought. The future status of permits will be determined as part of this park management planning process. The Charter has gone slightly further with this exception. The past practice has been to issue a fuelwood permit for specific lot and concession blocks. Many recreation camps have held fuelwood permits in the past, although with motorized access available to all, many are bringing fuelwood into their camps instead of taking it from the park area. The legislation has determined that there will be no motorized vehicle use (ATVs, 4x4s etc.) off the approved road and trail system, therefore harvesting areas must be within easy access of properties and tenured land or the approved road and trail system.

Management direction is required on the process for reviewing and approving new fuelwood permits and appropriate areas for collecting deadwood.

Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Charter direction:

- Existing fuelwood permits may be renewed. Water access properties are eligible to apply for new fuelwood permits (Charter, page 7).

Actual and Potential Impacts:

- Conflicts with other users
- Disturbance of wildlife and other users (chainsawing – noise and air pollution)
- Loss of standing deadwood for wildlife habitat
- Loss of nutrients returning to the soil from decay of wood through natural processes

Perceived Ecological Stress
Fuelwood Harvesting

This activity was not a topic of the 2005 interview process.

OPTION 1: Existing permits may continue to be issued and new permits for water access only properties may be issued based on an area identified by lot and concession. Dead wood harvesting only.

OPTION 2: Existing and new fuelwood permits may be issued with the following restrictions made for harvesting areas: water access cottagers may be allowed to harvest dead wood only within 100m of their property and recreation camp permit holders may be allowed to harvest dead wood only from the permit area (.5 ha) or within 5m on either side of the approved motorized vehicle access road and trail system. Other areas may be identified for fuelwood harvesting by the park

superintendent (for example, a blowdown in a stand of trees may be identified as a location to allow harvesting).

OPTION 3: Future fuelwood permits may be issued for harvesting dead wood, but harvest areas would be identified outside the park boundary or areas within the park which may be identified for fuelwood harvesting by the superintendent (for example, a blowdown in a stand of trees may be identified as a location to allow harvesting).

7. Commercial Tourism

Commercial tourism development may be considered in provincial parks. Development would have to be compatible with the classification and values of the park. New tourism establishments on Crown land (privately operated) are an option that the public needs to consider for the KHSSP. The range of development options might include: new outpost camps, road accessible natural and cultural heritage interpretation or education facilities, guided llama trekking or an eco-lodge. Land disposition for a new commercial use is permitted under the authority of a land use permit or lease only, and is not available for purchase. Tourism proposals are subject to public consultation through a park management plan or plan amendment. Proposals would need to demonstrate that it is complementary to the park's objectives.

Currently, there are four commercial outpost camps within the Kawartha Highlands. These commercial operators fly clients in to specified lakes mostly for fishing opportunities.

Management direction is required for both new and existing commercial tourism opportunities.

OPTION 1: Existing outpost camps would continue and operators would be allowed to transfer their business if interest exists. New commercial tourism opportunities would be screened to ensure that they are consistent with the park values, vision and purpose and will not impact the ecological integrity of the park.

OPTION 2: Existing outpost camps would continue and when current operators no longer wish to continue their business venture the opportunity would be phased out. New commercial tourism opportunities, which are consistent with the park values, vision and purpose, would be considered only if the new facilities are road accessible and will not impact the ecological integrity of the park.

OPTION 3: Existing outpost camps would continue and when current operators no longer wish to continue their business venture the opportunity would be phased out. New commercial tourism opportunities would not be considered.

Management Topics to be addressed in the Preliminary Park Management Plan

This section identifies ten additional topics (in three broad categories) which will have management policies presented for public review in the preliminary park management plan, Stage 3 of this park management planning process. These topics are only touched on briefly in this document. If there are other topics that have not been presented here that you feel are of concern, we would encourage you to identify these in your submission.

ACCESS & INFRASTRUCTURE

Please note that the extent and location of any and all proposed park development or site alteration will be subject to the requirements of the *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves*.

8. Public Access on East and West Sides of Park

A provision in the *Kawartha Highlands Signature Site Park Act, 2003 (KHSSP Act)* allows for the potential construction of two new roads within the Park, to provide public access to both the east and west sides of the Park. An Environmental Assessment under the *Class Environmental Assessment for Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves*, including the preparation of an Environmental Study Report and all associated consultation, is underway to determine appropriate options for access. Ontario Parks has retained the services of Stantec Consulting Ltd. to carry out the environmental assessment work. The Access Road Study identified eight access alternatives, including four on the west side and four on the east side of the park. The alternatives include "do nothing", upgrades to four existing side roads, as well as construction of two new access roads (one on each side of the Park).

Public open houses were held in May and June of 2005 in order to explain the environmental assessment process and to seek input on potential access road alternatives as well as the evaluation criteria for identifying preferred alternatives. Over 125 individuals provided written comments on the road alternatives and evaluation criteria. Environmental field investigations and traffic counts were carried out along the access road alternatives. In addition, public input has been compiled, reviewed and considered; Aboriginal communities' consultation initiated; background information reviewed; and evaluation criteria established. The consultant has developed advantages and disadvantages for each road option and these will be presented at open houses in Summer 2006. The preferred public access road option will be presented in the preliminary park management plan and these results are required prior to assessing where any future park infrastructure would be best located.

9. Infrastructure and Service

The results of the above environmental assessment process will be required for determining the location for new facilities in the park. Infrastructure required must be assessed and decisions made on type, location and operation. Facilities that may be considered include: a park administrative office, maintenance compound, visitor centre, public washroom facilities, day use facilities, etc. Parking areas will also need to be

addressed, as significant concern has been raised regarding (1) conflicts between park visitors and private landowners or tenure holders, who use public launching and parking facilities to access their properties, and (2) health and safety concerns from inappropriate parking by visitors, caused by insufficient parking. The development footprint of any future park infrastructure should be minimized and designed in a manner consistent with the "Purpose" section of the *KHSSP Act*. The preliminary park management plan will provide direction for a waste management strategy and any future revenue generation initiatives that would be consistent with the purpose of and vision for the park.

10. Visitor Management

The KHSSP presents a number of challenges for a visitor management strategy:

- over 23 access points (official & unofficial) and a perimeter boundary which is extensive and uncontrolled,
- 500 cottages within the site and an additional 1500 cottages adjacent to the site,
- 57 recreation (hunt) camps, 24 registered traplines, 14 bait harvest areas, 6 bear management areas,
- several long established canoe routes,
- approximately 880 km of trails used by motorized vehicles throughout the park,
- several OFSC trails (snowmobile club trails) traverse through the area, and
- a variety of recreational uses in all seasons.

The preliminary park management plan will provide direction on a permitting system for activities, vehicles, access for property owners/tenure holders and their guests, a reservation system for campsites and other topics that may arise from consultations.

11. Motorized Vehicle Road and Trail System

Both the *KHSSP Act* and Charter have directed that an inventory of roads and trails used by motorized vehicles within the Kawartha Highlands be mapped and that the Management Advisory Board provide advice to the Minister on which roads and trails should be authorized for use by motorized vehicles (for access to properties, tenured land and hunting). To date, work has been completed on mapping the road and trail network, as well as soliciting public review and input into the mapping. The Board's next step is to determine which trails should be recommended for authorization. In constructing this advice, the Board will incorporate the direction outlined in the legislation and Charter.

12. Future Land Acquisition

From time to time, private land holdings within and adjacent to the KHSSP may be made available for acquisition (e.g., purchase, conservation easement, donation). To date, several properties available for purchase have been identified to park staff and it is important that criteria be developed to evaluate these properties and their contribution to the park's biodiversity and/or ecological integrity. As well, certain Crown lands adjacent to the boundary may be of value to include in the park, such as the old growth pine forest stands in the geographic township of Anstruther which were previously identified as forest reserves (mining tenure). The preliminary park management plan will provide direction on evaluation criteria for future land acquisitions.

13. Private Hydro or Phone Line Installations

Concern raised during the previous consultations included the ability of those property owners that are entirely surrounded by the park or immediately adjacent to the park to

be able to have hydro and telephone service in the future if it was not currently available. Both of these utilities might require installation of lines or cables on park land adjacent to the properties. The Charter has provided assurances for these particular landowners. New hydro or phone lines which travel over private property do not involve MNR/OP. If the intent is to install lines over Crown land, a work permit is required under the Public Lands Act for any clearing, ditching, etc. An application is submitted to MNR/OP and is then reviewed and assessed from the perspective of the activity's impact as well as notification requirements under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. The proponent is required to undertake this consultation, and to address any public or Ministry concerns. The preliminary management plan will address the required protocol for reviewing applications to ensure minimal possible impact to the environment for approval of any future installations.

NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION

14. Wildlife Management

Wildlife management in the KHSSP is under the jurisdiction of Bancroft District. Large game (deer, moose) are managed on a Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) basis, where survey information is taken at the WMU level and allocations for harvest are based on this. In this case, KHSSP is part of WMU 60. Reporting is also in place, but at the WMU level. The preliminary park management plan will incorporate management direction on harvest allocations, overabundant wildlife, species at risk, nuisance bear management and other topics which may arise during consultations.

15. Fisheries Management

Fisheries management in the KHSSP is under the jurisdiction of Bancroft District. Fisheries management will proceed on the basis of new Fisheries Management Zones (FMZ). Kawartha Highlands is part of FMZ 15. The preliminary park management plan will incorporate management direction on stocking (native and non-native species), use of live bait for fishing, invasive species, a possible lead sinker ban and other topics which may arise during consultations.

16. Vegetation Management

Natural disturbances such as fire, insect infestation, disease and blow down are recognized as important disturbance processes for habitat regeneration and to maintain ecological integrity. These processes leave behind a pattern of disturbance which allows for renewal and maintains a diversity of habitats. The preliminary park management plan will describe the direction for management of natural disturbances and habitat rehabilitation.

RESOURCE USE

17. Enhanced Tenure

There are currently 57 recreation camps and 3 commercial outfitters within the park. The policies established in Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy apply to this park, so the management plan will determine enhanced tenure opportunities for existing camps. Enhanced tenure is not guaranteed. If lands were needed to protect significant

natural or recreational values, enhanced tenure would not be granted. A decision to grant enhanced tenure, or to transfer recreational camps will be addressed through a screening process, and in the context of the preliminary park management plan.

Next Steps...

The planning team will accept comments on this *Management Options* document during the 60-day review period commencing on the release of this document. To assist us in reviewing the input on this document, please complete the enclosed questionnaire. The future resource management direction for the Kawartha Highlands will be based on public and aboriginal consultation results, background information, science and the requirements of legislation and policy. This direction will be outlined in a preliminary park management plan, tentatively scheduled for release in Spring 2007. Your comments, participation and knowledge are important to ensure the best possible plan is developed for the Kawartha Highlands. Thank you for participating in this process.

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